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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. MONGBE	(Benin)
later:	Mr. RYSINSKI (Vice-Chairman)	(Poland)
later:	Mr. MONGBE (Chairman)	(Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE 1990s (continued) (A/48/333)

(c) EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/70-E/1993/16 and A/48/393)

(d) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/48/39 and A/48/491)

AGENDA ITEM 104: HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/309 and A/48/364)

1. Mr. SERSALE di CERISANO (Argentina) said that technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) was a priority area of Argentina's international economic policy. In addition to allocating the necessary technical and financial resources, since TCDC was a modality that should be included in national cooperation policies, Argentina had set up a national coordinating centre for TCDC, and it had drawn up a list, in English, of offers of horizontal cooperation that included all Argentine institutions that had the potential to participate in TCDC, some of which were already doing so. Argentina supported the TCDC programming exercises carried out by groups of countries at the sectoral level with the participation of the public and private sectors. Argentina was currently taking part in 249 TCDC projects in various sectors. It supported TCDC at the regional and subregional levels and had established a fund for scientific and technical training at the regional level, where Argentina was contributing to the financing of 80 projects. In the area of cooperation with Africa and Asia, Argentina had a fund for TCDC activities in general and another in the area of migration.

2. Technical cooperation among developing countries was a priority area not only for UNDP but for the United Nations system as a whole. Delegations should reread Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/41, which laid the cornerstone for future work in that area. Japan and a number of other countries were already implementing Council resolution 1992/41, which should inspire other delegations to do the same.

3. Technical cooperation among developing countries should be included as a first option in country programmes and projects and in the programmes of international and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, it was necessary to strengthen the UNDP Special Unit for TCDC, which had a mandate for the entire system, not only for UNDP. Measures should be taken to avoid the reduction of the staff of the Special Unit. It was also necessary to maintain the level of Special Programme Resources (SPRs) at the levels that had been agreed for the fifth programming cycle. At the intergovernmental level, it was necessary to monitor the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/41; the Council should ensure that the system was making use of the TCDC modality by including it in its respective programmes.

4. Mr. BELLA (Slovakia) said that Slovakia fully supported the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation and the goals of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. During the current year, Slovakia had provided grants for 150 students from developing countries, and its experts were extensively involved in United Nations development programmes. The United Nations should consider making more intensive use of experts, goods and services from the Central and Eastern European countries within United Nations development programmes.

5. Slovakia was also concerned at the protectionist measures and customs barriers that hampered the access of products from developing countries to the markets of developed countries. Since the insolvency and indebtedness of the developing countries acted as a constraint on world economic growth and sustainable development, the United Nations and the international financial institutions should take more vigorous measures to solve those problems.

6. Slovakia agreed wholeheartedly with the priority that was being given to human resources development within United Nations assistance programmes. Developing human resources was the only reliable way of improving the economic well-being of the developing countries. Human resources development should also be given priority in the countries in transition, where the development of a market economy made it necessary for people to acquire both new knowledge and skills and a new way of thinking.

7. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) said that international efforts to alleviate the pressing problems of rampant unemployment, increasing poverty and widespread urban malaise had been seriously hampered by various factors - including external indebtedness - which necessitated restrictions on public spending and consumed a substantial share of official development assistance.

8. Economic and technical cooperation among the developing countries could play a more active role in enhancing the development of human resources and should accord priority to programmes to accelerate the integration of women in development. In many societies, women were the victims of pervasive discrimination with regard to employment, a factor which had a direct impact on development. Training programmes to enable women to join the workforce should be a priority. In fact, the success of technical cooperation among developing countries was closely tied to the implementation of programmes to promote productive employment in those countries.

9. As the reports under consideration demonstrated, South-South cooperation had created an environment conducive to the achievement of such objectives. Programmes to promote the development of human resources should provide sufficient technological training to enable workers to develop the flexibility needed to adapt to changing requirement in the labour market and different economic climates.

10. Additional financial support was needed to enable the developing countries fully to benefit from increased South-South cooperation. Increased cooperation among the developing countries would provide the most effective way to enhance the benefits of resources from international development assistance.

11. Mr. RYSINSKI (Poland) said that economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) was, first of all, the responsibility of the developing countries, a function of their commitment and determination to coordinate and integrate their economic activities. The international community should find ways and means of enhancing economic and technical cooperation among developing countries that would ensure international competitiveness, free trade and access to markets.

12. Increased cooperation between the developing countries and the countries in transition could provide a stimulus for expanding internal markets, developing complementarities and differentiating production structures in the developing countries. In the long term, expanding technical cooperation among countries in transition and overcoming barriers to their growth could provide additional inputs for the same purpose, albeit indirectly.

13. In promoting ECDC and TCDC, the United Nations should facilitate the flow of information on international cooperation and trade, finance and investment. It should also support interaction among the different sectors and groups of countries by developing networks for information exchange and study, assisting in the establishment of promotion centres and identifying complementaries among countries and region.

14. It was necessary to determine what share of United Nations resources could be earmarked for ECDC and TCDC, and through which channels. While the first matter required careful study and decision-making at the political level, the second drew attention to the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations development system, in particular UNDP and the resident representative network.

15. While the United Nations system offered impressive opportunities for supporting ECDC, that system should be further adapted and its potential for coordination both at Headquarters and in the field must be enhanced in order to strengthen ECDC.

16. Mr. CARMICHAEL (Canada), speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that the principal aim of the agenda for development should be the pursuit of sustainable human development, and progress towards that goal would depend upon the equal participation of women and men. While considerable progress had been made over the past 20 years, in the effective integration of women in the development process, great disparities persisted in many countries. Women accounted for the majority of the poor, worked the longest hours, earned the lowest pay and received the fewest benefits even though they were the principal producers in most of the developing world.

17. The role of women in development was not primarily a women's issue, but a matter of effectively utilizing all available resources. Structural changes in institutions were a prerequisite for improvement in the well-being of women and society as a whole. Effective development required the participation of women as decision-makers in the identification, elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes. United Nations bodies should use the agenda for development as a springboard to maximize efforts at integrating women into development, the goal being full participation of women as equal partners in the sustainable development of their societies.

(Mr. Carmichael, Canada)

18. In certain cases, for example when dealing with refugees, approaches specifically targeting women were in order. The vast majority of refugee families were headed by women, who were at a particular disadvantage when removed from their traditional support systems. Non-governmental organizations had a special role in facilitating and implementing community-based programmes, and issues relating to women in development should also be addressed through that channel.

19. Agenda 21 had recognized unequivocably the link between advancing the development of women and achieving sustainable development objectives. The delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand shared the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development (A/48/393) that, rather than considering women in isolation, gender analysis should be a key part of the framework for analysing problems such as poverty, urbanization and population growth, and in reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21. In conclusion, they were pleased to note that energetic preparations were being made for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

20. Mr. HORIN (Ukraine) said that the Secretary-General's report on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development (A/48/393) provided a complete and adequate account of the situation of women in contemporary society. In particular, his delegation agreed with the conclusion that poverty tended to fall more heavily on women, who were in general disadvantaged.

21. In countries with economies in transition, women were the least protected at the social level. The process of market reforms, which was accompanied by the elimination of redundancies in the labour market, was having a particularly adverse effect on women with children and single mothers. Another adverse effect of the economic recession in those countries was a decline in the birth rate, which might create difficulties for future economic growth.

22. Effective integration of women in development should be accompanied by a broadening of social guarantees for women on the part of Governments, and socially useful activities of women should be supported by the adoption of appropriate legislation.

23. One way of achieving sustainable development was to strengthen the role of women in society. Society should realize that equality between women and men could improve all areas of social, political and economic life. The Fourth International Conference on Women, which would be held in Beijing in 1995, should mobilize the efforts of the international community and each country in particular to create equal opportunities for women.

24. Mr. Rysinski (Poland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

25. Mr. UNNIKRISHNAN (India) said that his Government had long been committed to South-South cooperation as an essential means of increasing the links among developing countries and widening the base for international economic development. The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) had been providing technical assistance to other developing countries for several

(Mr. Unnikrishnan, India)

decades. Over 20,000 trainees from other developing countries had studied in India under that programme. India had interacted with over 100 countries in a wide variety of fields, and had been involved in a wide range of South-South cooperation projects.

26. With the regard to the mobilization and integration of women in development and human resource development, special attention should be given to the impact of development processes on women and special measures enacted to ensure their participation in social, educational, cultural and economic advancement. His Government had formulated a National Perspective Plan and established a National Commission for Women to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards for women.

27. Any effective and comprehensive human resources development programme must focus on skills for productive employment, the ability to adapt to changing economic conditions and access to support structures, such as capital, where necessary. All segments of society must be integrated into the mainstream of development; therefore, alleviation of poverty must be an essential part of any programme of human resource development. His Government's strategies for the implementation of programmes designed to address that issue focused directly on participation and empowerment of the people. Success would also depend on the external environment, since the real resource base of many developing countries had been shrinking rapidly in recent years. Improved market access, financial and technology transfers, terms of trade, debt relief and economic growth were therefore essential.

28. One reason developing countries continued to lag behind was that they were behind in technological progress. Therefore, concessional access to technology would be essential for sustained economic development in such countries. Structural adjustment programmes undertaken by developing countries also had an impact in human terms. Appropriate social safety net mechanisms must therefore be put into place. Appropriate redeployment and redistribution through retraining and the promotion of self-employment must be part of the overall employment policy and must be funded with external resources.

29. Mr. DEBABECHE (Algeria) said that restrictions on access by developing countries to technological advances had forced them to develop their indigenous potential by exchanging expertise, experience and information, thereby giving new impetus to technical cooperation between such countries. The increased volume of such activities indicated a growing awareness of the comparative advantage of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

30. His delegation supported the proposals made at the eighth session of the High-Level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, regarding the preparation of projects at the national level, financed from the indicative planning figure (IPF) in order to promote TCDC. Such cooperation had been a catalyst in promoting South-South cooperation, but it had been hampered by inadequate financing and institutional support. The establishment of a regional fund for the financing of TCDC activities would represent a major contribution.

(Mr. Debabeche, Algeria)

31. The relevance of centres of excellence in meeting of the technical training needs of developing countries had been stressed at the meeting of the High-level Committee. Accordingly, Algeria had established training programmes in a wide variety of fields which had been recognized as centres of excellence and which provided training for leaders from other developing countries, particularly in Africa. His delegation reiterated its full support for the provisions of decision 8/2, section II, paragraphs 3 and 4.

32. The future role of the countries of the South in the international economic system would depend in large part on their ability to take advantage of their complementarities and mobilize their full potential. The developing countries had established a series of promising complementary cooperation mechanisms. A number of successful initiatives had been launched in recent years, demonstrating a growing awareness among developing countries of potential that must be tapped. One of them concerned the efforts by regional groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America to set up free trade areas. In order to realize its full potential, economic and technical cooperation among developing countries must be accompanied by a significant improvement in the international economic environment. The relevant commitments made in various agreements, particularly Agenda 21, must be carried through.

33. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that his Government attached great importance to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, and had focused considerable effort on implementing development programmes. For over three decades, it had shared its know-how and experience in such areas as alternate energy development, literacy, water engineering and irrigation and rural and community development. Israel believed that human resource development and technology were essential elements in sustainable development. It was prepared to play a constructive role in the efforts of international organizations wherever it could make a contribution.

34. Economic cooperation among developing countries should be fostered in order to increase partnership in the developing world and strengthen bargaining power with the industrialized world. In pursuit of self-reliance, developing countries should seek to reorient trade in manufactured products from established suppliers in developed countries to newly-emerging sources in developing countries. His Government was proud that, although it had not been endowed with rich natural resources, it had cooperated with more than 100 countries. The Middle East held tremendous potential for economic development, and its best interests would be served through regional economic cooperation. Israel was currently engaged in bilateral negotiations to bring an end to the conflicts of the past and in multilateral negotiations to lay the foundation for the future. During the recent multilateral talks in the framework of the Middle East peace process, Israel had presented detailed and concrete proposals for projects for regional cooperation and development in several fields.

35. Israel had made significant technological advances in the use of water resources, and other countries had benefited from its research and development in that vital field. It was prepared to share the expertise gained from the arid zone research centre in the Negev Desert with other developing countries and, in particular, all countries in the Middle East desiring to cooperate.

(Mr. Eliashiv, Israel)

36. Economic cooperation in the Middle East would serve not only the interests of the countries of the region, but of the entire world. His delegation hoped that the recent historic changes in the region would find expression in the General Assembly.

37. Mr. Mongbe (Benin) resumed the Chair.

38. Mrs. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that, although three years had elapsed since the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, as was pointed out in the Secretary-General's report for the LDCs as a whole, there had been economic stagnation and a fall in per capita income, with negative to zero real growth in overall gross domestic product (GDP) in 1991 and 1992 (A/48/333, para. 4). One of the basic reasons for that situation was the failure by the donor countries to meet their commitments to increase official development assistance, reduce or forgive debt and open trade. While most of the least developed countries had taken steps to develop and modernize their economic structures, they could not extricate themselves from the crisis without assistance.

39. The Niger was listed among the least developed countries, and it welcomed the decision of some of the industrialized countries to increase the share of their gross national product allocated to official development assistance. Those efforts, however, did not meet the commitments undertaken under the Programme of Action and were inadequate to address all the problems faced by the least developed countries. A decisive effort must be made to end the crisis and bring about growth. Substantial resources must be allocated in support of their efforts to improve their own situation.

40. Instead of decreasing, as might have been expected, the number of least developed countries appeared to be increasing: the number of countries designated as such had risen from 41 to 47. Those countries appealed for the urgent implementation of the Programme of Action, including an increase in official development assistance to the required annual level, the complete cancellation of all forms of debt, adequate compensatory measures in the final act of the Uruguay Round, higher commodity prices and improved structural adjustment reforms.

41. Ms. ASHRAF (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that UNESCO had established an intersectoral working group to consider what contributions it might make to the achievement of the goals set out in the Secretary-General's report on the role of the United Nations system in enhancing international cooperation for development. The International Programme for the Development of Communication was UNESCO's major undertaking to strengthen communication capacities in developing countries. It also sponsored projects focusing on the development of infrastructure and human resources training, through activities related to training in science and technology, technical and vocational education and strengthening of institutions and infrastructures for human development.

(Ms. Ashraf, UNESCO)

42. UNESCO was devoting priority to activities to fully implement the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. Its programme on science for progress and the environment was designed to strengthen the national scientific and technological capacities of the developing countries. The Priority Africa Programme was one component of a regional strategy defined by the African States themselves to promote cooperation on the continent, mobilize extrabudgetary resources and support interdisciplinary and intersectoral activities. Most of the least developed countries in Africa had received UNESCO's assistance in technological research, particularly in support of rural development. UNESCO also provided assistance in preventive education to combat drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. She also drew attention to other programmes through which UNESCO provided assistance in the natural sciences, culture and the strengthening of communication infrastructures.

43. UNESCO had consistently supported the integration of the modality of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) during the elaboration of its plans and programmes and for the past two years had urged its field offices to assume a more central role in programme implementation, thereby facilitating more effective use of the modality.

44. It often was somewhat arbitrary to distinguish TCDC activities that supported institution-building from those which supported the exchange of data and experience via networking. UNESCO supported institution-building in 20 developing countries in such fields as hydrology, oceanography, press and radio, education, general data exchange and cross-cultural collaboration. A salient example of TCDC in the field of communication was COMNET, a network of national and regional communication research and documentation centres. UNESCO also provided assistance to the Regional Informatics Network for Africa (RINAF). UNESCO also provided assistance through regional training institutions in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific region as a means of enhancing TCDC.

45. In conclusion, she noted that training and education were virtually meaningless without the institutional infrastructure within which experts could carry out their work. UNESCO looked forward to the elaboration of concrete modalities for interaction to enhance the value of its efforts at the national level.

46. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) traced the evolution of the concept of development and of the role of the State in providing for the needs of society and underscored the economic and financial difficulties faced by the developing countries during the 1980s. The structural adjustment programmes which those countries had implemented in an effort to improve their balance-of-payments situation often had had a devastating impact on society, in particular, the poorest segments of the population.

47. Studies by United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had focused the international community's attention on that situation, generating an awareness of the importance of ensuring that development focused on the individual. In his delegation's view, development not only must be lasting, but also must be economically rational, socially just, culture-specific and respectful of human rights.

(Mr. Amaziane, Morocco)

48. The development of a society should be measured by the extent to which the fundamental needs of the population were met with respect to food, education, health, drinking water, sanitation, transportation and other social services. It was time to usher in a new era in international relations based on genuine solidarity in pursuit of mutually agreed global objectives.

49. Mr. MWAUNGULU (Malawi) said that the role of women in development was paramount, particularly with respect to small holder agricultural development. Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 provided the focus needed to achieve results in that area. In recognition of the important role of women in development, in 1992, his Government had established a Ministry of Women's Affairs, Children and Community Services.

50. As noted in the report on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (A/48/333), the position of those countries was extremely vulnerable. Not only were they implementing major policy reforms but their vulnerability was in many cases compounded by natural and man-made disasters. In the case of Malawi, which, in addition, was land-locked, the fact that it maintained economic and political stability and was implementing democratization processes was little short of a miracle. Donor countries should bear that in mind when deciding on official development assistance (ODA), debt relief and more favourable terms of trade for they alone could help to break the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation. The significant contraction of net resource flows between 1990 and 1991 showed no signs of being reversed. Although there had been large-scale debt cancellation, more needed to be done. Existing debt relief measures had not been sufficiently implemented; they should be reviewed and then applied more vigorously.

51. Deteriorating terms of trade were a further obstacle to development. While increased private investment from the developed countries and multilateral institutions, on concessional terms, in manufacturing and industrialization could help to break the overreliance of LDCs on the export of commodities, trade liberalization was also needed. It was in the vital interests of international trade that the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations be concluded on schedule.

52. Finally, noting that the mid-term review required adequate preparation by UNCTAD, he said that his delegation supported the proposal regarding the establishment of the appropriate institutional machinery for that purpose.

53. Mr. MOHAMED (Sudan) said that his country attached particular importance to youth and women. The 10-year national strategy devoted considerable resources to both those sectors. Provincial committees had been established to address the problems of working women, particularly in rural areas, and a woman had even been appointed as a minister. The number of women university students now exceeded that of men and 10 new universities had been established; there could be no development without education. Women's associations participated with government and international organizations in the programme on sustainable rural development.

(Mr. Mohamed, Sudan)

54. The Sudan also attached great importance to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and the failure of the donor countries to fulfil their obligations in that regard had been a disappointment. Unless they received sufficient assistance and encouragement from the international community, stringent policies of economic reform which the least developed countries had adopted would severely strain their economic and social infrastructure. He therefore called for increased development financing for those countries, the reduction or cancellation of their debt and higher basic commodity prices, giving priority to the exports.

55. Mr. OLISEMEKA (Nigeria) said that sustainable development had become an internationally accepted goal for the twenty-first century. It was broadly agreed that in order to achieve that goal absolute poverty must be eliminated. That was not easy to do given a hostile economic environment and the fact that structural adjustment programmes tended to erode the resources available for social development. A strong commitment was needed to reducing the environmental cost of development and to distributing the benefits of economic progress more equitably. Such equitable distribution necessitated better treatment of and empowerment strategies for women, for it had been demonstrated that economic growth was greater in areas where women had higher status.

56. The structural adjustment under way in Nigeria appeared to be turning the economy round and halting the decline in the gross national product (GNP). The solutions to the main constraints and problems facing Nigeria lay largely with women. The gradual convergence of views on the types of economic and social policies needed in the developing countries and the structural adjustment programmes being implemented there were essential to stimulate growth.

57. Stronger economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (ECDC and TCDC) was crucial. Expanded trading opportunities should promote a fuller mobilization of resources and stimulate economic growth world wide. In that connection, he welcomed the renewed vigour and determination that had been apparent at the most recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee (IFCC). However, South-South trade and economic relations remained the weakest link in international economic cooperation. Economic interdependence required new perceptions which would translate TCDC ideas into reality. Efforts should therefore be made to adapt the 38 programmes of activity listed in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries to the realities of the changing international political and economic climate. In implementing TCDC activities, full consideration should be given to national needs and priorities, and special attention should be paid to the specific, urgent needs of LDCs. His delegation associated itself with the appreciation expressed by the Group of 77 and China for the report of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (A/48/39) and called for endorsement of the report by the General Assembly. Finally, given that UNDP had a crucial role to play in TCDC activities, he expressed concern at the limited budget resources available to the Programme.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.